

Yada Yada Kismet



Andreas Gripp

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Beliveau Books

ESSEX COUNTY

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NOTES

Kismet means fate or destiny

pschent is pronounced *skent* and was the double crown worn by Egyptian pharaohs

Namaste is pronounced *Nah-mah-stay* and is taken from the Sanskrit: "I bow to you"

Kōan is a paradoxical anecdote or riddle used in Buddhism to provoke enlightenment

meatball, in baseball terms, is a pitch that's in the strike zone, easy to hit

Furby is an American electronic robotic toy popular in the late 1990s.

Spalding was the official basketball of the NBA when Michael Jordan played

Deutsche is pronounced *Doych* and is German for "German"

Davon haben wir nichts gewusst! is German for *We knew nothing about it!*

AUTHOR'S NOTE

26 of these 32 poems were penned between May 1st and 20th, 2025. The other 6 are new emendations, undertaken this same month, of recent or older offerings which made an entreaty to reside herein:

Staying After School (2021)

The Language of Sparrows (2006)

Paper Mate (2023)

Aardvark (2020)

Artificial Intelligence (2024)

ça n'a pas d'importance (2024)

I'd like to offer my sincere gratitude to you, dear reader, for spending your time with my stories and my thoughts.

— Andreas

June 2025



**Break your writer's block, they said.
It will be fun, they said.**

Dear writers,
today's prompt of the
day is the. *The* begins
many an intricate sentence
but has no intrinsic worth
other than as an article
of grammar yet you cannot
write an article without it.

Still, if that's the case, *of* could
be the word of today except
for is more appropriate in this
context. Yes. Today's word for
the day is for. It can also be
thought of as fore and four
make eight if heard phonetically,
nonetheless it may have nothing
at all to do with addition
but the *past* tense of eat —

however, since
there is an absence of food
throughout this exercise
it again highlights the
importance of of,
which looks rather peculiar
when written in succession,
much like The The,
an English rock band formed in '79
whose only regular member is
Matt Johnson not John Mattson
in case you get confused and
therefore they should be called I
I, which is likely to be interpreted
as aye-aye if only presented
audibly, said to some

phantom pirate captain
just beyond the stage
with a hook for a hand
and a peg for a leg,

a parrot
having fled his shoulder
after getting befuddled with
its mimicry, and tell me
who can blame it
after a fiasco such as this?

And has it never occurred
to you there may be a perfectly
good eye
beneath his fading patch of black?
Why don't you write of *that* instead?
No, not "that" —I mean the
goddamn eye. No one else
has thought of it.
That much I can tell you.

about-face

I know a poet
who begins his verse
with an astonishing,
a-ha end,

pedals *back*
like a politician—
once he's taken his
oath:

a bear on a circus
bike, where *out* is *in*
and forward a *reverse*
on steroids.

Our world is a line
that's *balled*, a double
entendre, yes—
so who are you
to enjoin our every
arrow, signs of speed &
nearness—as sharing
indisputable truth?

Forget the legalese —
I caught one of them
on the highway —
an orange, bold-faced
lie — a detour of
remittance, returning me
where I'd started,

or maybe it was an
offer of *salvation*, the chance
to do it over, this err-prone,
rudderless trek? That
I should be *walking*
instead of *driving*, giving
myself the time

to make all the right
decisions; yielding
where I should,
speeding where I must,
aware a u-turn
is an n
that's downside-up,

and if your final
line is lacking
a coup de grâce,
the one that snags the prize
from all the others,

just repeat your closing words
just repeat your closing words

The Confession

I have 13 seconds
to finally say
I love you
like I mean it.

In just under
14 clicks, a car will
strike you soundly
as it speeds on through
the red.

Red is the colour
of wine & valentine,
not the spurt
that's on the road,
making the street
look like it's bleeding
when it's you.

I can blame the *signal*
on the sidewalk,
say its recurrent,
orange hand had come
too late,

accusing it of *waving*
when it should have
twirled its finger to
head on back, listen
instead to the 40ish
me by your side,
the one who'll stand
at the corner and watch
you go, out of living,
out of breath,

who took your years of
prime without the *why*,
his tongue in a
Gordian knot,
unable to fathom
one word from another —
not just then but now —
in the span it takes
to scream your lovely
name, there in the
flash of chrome
& blinking lights.

Jitter Juice

The coffee maker's
cacophonous, its array
of beeps enough to rouse
a cadaver.

No need for over-
kill—though my eyelids
have been leaden
as if weighted down by
coins, a pair of
silver dollars
bearing Lincoln's
bearded visage,
laurel-headed
Caesar, or a Pharaoh's
crowning pschent;
arms clasped to my
sides

like a stiff & mummied
Ramses, woozy like some
bandaged Lazarus,
days after rigor
mortis,

staggering out the
bedroom
as if it's a tomb
and Jesus summons,

a Frankenstein's
plodding steps,
convoked by the
song of my people: ever-
groggy, dishevelled,
beyond any bed-
headed author of
 $E = mc^2$,

who admonishes
morning wrens—for their
failure to do the same,
their lyric
unable to waken,
their beauty put to
shame by the smell of
beans, hand-picked
by Juan Valdez,

worthy
of our worship, up before
the rooster's grating
call to rise & shine.

Karma

*I me mine, I me mine, I me mine
No one's frightened of playing it
Everyone's saying it
Flowing more freely than wine*

—The Beatles, 1970

I've come to *loathe* our brown-
robed, Buddhist friend. The way
he bows in the market
when he sees us, *to the Buddha*
residing within, then smiling *Namaste*.

Oh fuck off, I mutter
under my breath.
Inside us are faulty guts,
decaying every
second while we stand.

He says the only thing
that's real is the present
moment. By the time he's
finished telling us
it's the past—

so we're always playing
catch-up.

He tries to make a funny:
think of it as ketchup,
once a hundred tomatoes,
its bottle in the future
to sail the ocean current,
with a message from your
older-to-younger self.
And if that bullshit's
not enough, he giggles *there IS*
no separate self,
nothing I/Me/Mine;

we're a circle of inter-
connections: no dawn &
no finale, our bronchi
like the furcates
of the woods. *Everything is air,*
grinning like a gibbon
when he says it.

He spends 21 hours a
day on his stinky
pillow, fished from a
Zellers bin, eyes *latched*
like a double garage,
kōaning his years away:
*Don't just do something,
sit there!*

I'm sick of his joyful smirk,
his shaved & shiny head,
his 30 cans of *Foamy*—
aligned like some mandala
in his cart; the incense
that reeks of seaweed
when he visits, sticking
it under our noses
till we cough, calling it
the breath of our existence.

He says in his *previous*
shitty life
he was a cockroach,

learned a lot from
his experience
under the fridge.
I clench my fists
and warmly envision
an earlier farce of my own—

the terminator, slayer
of annoying bugs, spraying
the kitchen floor with DDT,

like the deodorant that he
spritzes on his Mahayana
skull,

laughing *take that*,
motherfucker,
failing to realize
vengeance finds its way
into *any* faith, that he'll wait
a billion lifetimes
to pay me back,
beaming every minute
as he does it.

**Gaza, or Bones,
or Just like Wesley Willis,
they threw me out of church**

*They threw me out of church
They threw me out of church
For the second time I told the preacher
to fuck off
I told Reverend Henry E. Miller
to suck a camel's dick*

—Wesley Willis

*You blind guides, who strain out a gnat
and swallow a camel*

—Matthew 23:24

All you ever hear
is my uncouth
method of expression.

*Why doesn't God
get off His ass
and finally save
the starving children
in that Holy Land of His?*

Your focus
is the *ass* of God,
which implies
He may be prone
to bodily functions,
need some Cottonelle,
all-too-human
like the rest of us,

and on my supposed
blasphemy,
while giving *omniscience*,
omnipotence, *all-loving*
a fucking pass,

forgetting about
the boy of *Palestine*,
whose ribs are ready to *burst*
on through his skin, who counts
them back and forth
to 24, most sacred
of His numbers, the sum
of $12 + 12$:

Apostles &
the *Days* of Christmas;
the Tribes of *Israel*,
Gates of New
Jerusalem;

and then there's
mother Eve,
somehow fashioned
from a bone in
her husband's chest—
ironically superfluous,

and didn't my *mom*
ever clean my mouth with
laundry soap?
Lathering *up*
my sacrilegious tongue?
Despite her full-time jobs
there wasn't cash—
the dripping, bathroom
faucet—unable to work His
magic in the night.

The Tanka

*—an unrhymed Japanese verse form of five
lines having 5/7/5/7/7 syllables per line*

You were more than
a *savant*,
sucking at everything, yes,

but how we gasped
when you scrawled out a
tanka, the only thing
you ever wrote,
your tremor like a
bounce on the Richter
scale,

making something
out of loss
post-*accident*, contusions
and concussions, the burial
of your beloved
you were unable to
attend; the utterance
of your voice:
the sound of a
marshmallow mouth—

*My daughter races,
attempting to catch the birds.
If she had the wings
of a pigeon, she'd leave me,
dropping occasional notes—*

rising from your wheelchair,
balanced on a single
leg; a teetering, one-trick
pony

but god *almighty*
what a trick.

And *then* they came for the fish...

I come up with
the oddest things
while downing cod.
Never mind
it rhymes with God.
That's Captain effing
Obvious.

But on Friday
I crossed the line —
bringing up the
Nazis had a 2nd,
jackboot Führer:
Karl Dönitz,
in May of '45,

that *Heil Dönitz!*
never caught on as well,
wouldn't instill the dread
which *Hitler's* surname had,
didn't roll off the tongue

like the Roman, click-heeled
greeting to his *monstrous*
predecessor,

that he preferred
his time as Admiral
a whole lot more,

hanging *out* with all the
flounder keeping *neutral*
through the war —

a torpedoed
Athenia,

Dachau &
Bergen-Belsen,

the Quislings,
Pétain's *Vichy*,
and the race to the Atomic Bomb —

knowing either way
they're on a plate
with Tartar sauce —
the mad Hungarian
version —

giving the look
that they are swimming
in some garnished
Milky Way, every lump
a star, their fins
beneath the white of
chilled surrender.

Alexis, Drunk Again

In your stupor
you speak of *butterflies*
on your bed, their *beau*
motif of wings—
embossed
upon your blanket,

dreaming they leap in
flight
throughout your slumber,
coming back
before the dawn
with nectar's scent,
wafting round your sheets
as if some *Wonka* factory,

my assumption
you're a youngster
you're descanting,
ignorant you have
your dentures
in a glass upon
your nightstand,

and unaware your
parents
drove out madly
to the store—the *crash*
in '71,
in answer
to your cravings
that fatal moonrise—
liquorice, taffy,
bonbons au chocolat,
crying when the
kids at school
were laughing *you're a girl!*

Much too sweet
a child
to be a boy;
the pitting
of your molars
one-by-one,
as you aged
in sugar-grey.

I will leave you to
your wine, your '25
Merlot, your *I only drink it*
for the fructose,

its promise to
offer pardon
every swig, this cloy
and bitter chalice
of the grape.

**World Donkey Day,
or Braying on the 8th of May**

Never mind the put-downs
or the jokes — that's easily
spearing fish in a wooden
barrel.

Ne'er a politician
will appear in this silly
poem. Nor a
correlation
with its behind. Always
at the rear and the rear
itself.

I will not call him
Jack. Nor say he's a
"poor man's horse" —
though as *Equus asinus*,
it's there in the family
tree.

There's much that can be
noted regarding the
concave of his back —

the per contra of the
camel's. I could
broach the *load* he's had to
bear along the mountain—
always the *final* one
to get a drink, be offered
exhalation in the shade.

I'll consider his *humility*—
carrying Christ
that palmful Sunday,
despite the ever-
knowing

the lauds belonged to Jesus
not to him, how *quickly*
the crowd can turn
by the end of the week.

Since then
he's kept it meek,
unworthy of a name
when next to *Shrek*,

that his smile
has become unsightly —
ever-vexing —

burdened with the
joy which he's been
scripted, after years of
conveying *Eeyore's*
melancholy,

still expectant
of that bright & glorious
Day of His return —
when he'll raise his lowly
eyes up to the sky,

hear the cheers
for his *appellation*,

when the last shall be
first, indeed.

Staying After School

Teacher tells me Sam was hung
for stealing his master's chicken.
I say it *wasn't* just the fowl but
the eggs that would have hatched.
I get a detention
for knowing the difference
'tween want & need.
For not-shutting-the-fuck-
up about fried &
scrambled

and how there wasn't any time
throughout the dawn—
the slave-work had to be done
by a certain hour, hands
a blackened Black,

before our star had blazed
on through the morning fog,
like a lighthouse on the rocks
above the sea so close yet far.

The Problem With Nature

is that we're duped to
trill its praise, just
beyond our tarmacs &
cement, our fists of rage
and road, the screech of
iron wheels, the digestion
of garbage trucks,

crooning that it's *peaceful*,
lovely,
the essence of the gods,

this calm of kindly
souls,

so entranced
with its seduction
that we fail to
note the talons
of the osprey,
its snatch of vole
like the *claw*
that snags the pony —
in our gaudy, cheap
arcades,

the birl of *eat-*
be-eaten, the bones
beneath the soil,

impotent to
see the brutality
of the leaves, there
on the forest floor,
the stretch & shove
of stems, seizing all the
sunlight of their neighbours,

and then the half-a-belly *up*
of discarded fish,
there along the shore,
in the clap of a gentle
lap,

seagulls shitting green
upon your head, your
insistence it's OK,
that it's natural and
deific—

this sharing of
their warmth, kiss of
celestial wings.

Thumbs Down

I blame *everything*
on our thumbs. Their
cursèd opposability;
picturing how things
would be
if not for their relative
acrobatics:

the trees all
where they were
if not for them; none to wield
an axe, grip a barrelled
pistol in the night,
birth the drop of
Fat Man
in Japan.

We've been told this
supposedly *elevates*
our species above the rest—
the way in which our
thumb has touched the tips
of every finger,

the sign of *I'm OK*
(now usurped by the
Aryan right).

This stout & stunted digit
is a narcissistic
rebel, refusing to stand
in line with all the others,
the longer, slimmer *doigts*
above its head —
stuck in its lowly place
upon our hand.

It gets an unduly
amount of *credit* —
for crafting our way
to the sky, the moon,
and one day to *Tau Ceti*.

I say it's not as clever
as we've made it out to be —
its lexicon rather
scant — locked in *yes* or *no*;

while the index points our
way; the pinky uplifts our
class while sipping chai;

and although the middle
likes to cuss, flip its phallic
shaft into the air, you have to admit
it's effective at revealing its
message in every language;

and then the one that screams
commitment —
“sorry boys, I’m taken” —
this bearer of gold & diamond,
breaker of fervent hearts.

Painter of Light

there's no time to cry; happy, happy
—R.E.M.

I want to live in a *painting*
by Thomas Kinkade.

The critics all
hate his guts—
and that makes me
feel at home—with his
pastel potpourri, gauche
tranquility, his snowfalls
always tender, no one
with a cause to
shovel drives.

I want to linger forever
in his cobblestone
house, open a Tudor window—
feed the pink & yellow birds;
keeping the fire stoked,
smoke *arising*
from the chimney
and the roast of
perfect mallows.

Everything is always perfect
in the village. There's Ted
en route to the lighthouse,
guiding pleasant boaters
to the dock. Dorothy
with her bulging, market
bag—willing & eager
to prepare
the family dinner.

No one ever drinks or
pops a fentanyl—
there's too much *cheer* in the valley
to even *think* of such a thing.
And though rock 'n' roll's too jarring,
they'll permit a mid-day blast—
of *Shiny Happy People*—goes well
with a Brahms allegro.

You might be shocked to learn
it wasn't *always* this way for him—
pretzeled, severed limbs;

the napalm
burning flesh
in Vietnam; a mother's eye
a-swell from a drunken
punch;

that after it was viewed,
his teacher was aghast—*Tommy!*
Put your paintbrush in the jar!
Go and stand in the corner!

It is said
he couldn't leave
until his tears were
warm with joy,
before the shrill of the final bell,
embarrassed
by his stomach's
grizzly growl, smiling
ear-to-ear
as though he meant it.

Zebediah

The Fiat just ahead
has been creeping like a loris.
If he drove any slower, you fume,
he'd be going backwards like a rail...

Shunting caboose
aside, Einstein got it wrong
with Relativity. When you're
forced to move like a slug —
a solid golden line
warning *don't you try to pass* —
you're suddenly in the future,
with your hands clasped on
his throat, demanding if he's
Amish, if he's unaware
the limit's 90K,
if his pedal's
just a footrest
in disguise;

wondering *why* he even bothered
to buy a car — if a baby passes
crawling on the right,

if the tortoise
changing lanes is mocking
eat my fucking dust!

And before you
froth & throttle
his hoary skull,
you'll ask him
where's the hat &
stache-less beard;
the suspenders
from Shenandoah;
if his buggy's up ahead,
his horse unable to master
the regressive trot—
reading Tolstoy's
Anna Karenina
as he waits, with the sloths
and all the snails beneath
a belatedly greening tree,
suddenly *spooked*
by the might of trains,
that life can flash to an
end in the time you've
blinked.

Hair Care by Pierre

I was finally
compelled to cut
my lengthy hair.
Twirling it on my fork
in spaghetti's place,
staining it Ragu-Red;
quaaffing it with my
wine, the peril of dangling
strands;

unable to see the road
whenever it flopped
in front of my eyes—
like a weary, shaggy
dog that blocks my view—

of the movie I'm
trying to watch: *Medusa*,
rival of Rapunzel (in terms of *follicles*
gone amok);
locks which turn to
snakes before it's over—

causing havoc
when it's lathered in
Selsen Blue.

This Frenchman barber assures
me I'll be able to see her *face*
as clear as day,
thrilled to make a house call,
that 911 has an option now
for bedhead gone berserk,

its clump of grey
expanding on the floor—
that my cat's been *hissing*
at, her back arched like the
Triomphe de l'Étoile,
mistaking it for
another of her kind.

I'll offer up a eulogy
at *St. Andreas*—
the Orthodox Church
of the Greeks
just down the road,

blubber I'll *miss*
the way it lifted
in the breeze,
like some starlet in
Côte d'Azur,

my tresses later waving
like a scarf out on a line,
gone blanc in its surrender
to the wind; or a flag
at the half of mast, mourning
my *forfeiture*,

like a blinded
Samson, betrayed—
not by some Delilah
but my need to be
pragmatic; what's left
beneath my *New York*
Giants cap, snagged
amid the incense
in the nave;

glancing
behind my unobstructed
shoulder—
as I walk the promenade,

fret the *breath* of old Perseus
will hoist it off my head
and out to sea.

Ochroma

I envy the muted fan
upon your balsa
writing desk.
Keeping you *cool*
in the heat of words.

I swear I got its
doppelgänger — albeit
at twice the price.
Unlike the *blades* of
your whirring mime,
mine's a leaf blower
stuck in traffic, blaring
on the horn to pick
up the pace, it doesn't
have all day to sit &
ponder; has a hissy
fit to throw, with someone
too lazy to grab
a fucking rake —
its thunder
bringing Zeus
to wince & cringe.

But I prefer
to write of *wood*
and not this grating,
Costco special.
Envisioning both
the hutch & drawers
which make your *escritoire*,
not in their current state—

but *there* when it was
chopped, the tree in
Ecuador, a worker by its side
when it was over,
scattering all the
foliage with a *whirlwind*
held by hand,
hurling away the memory of
what it was—the verde
of calming leaves,
a respite from the roar
of sun and man,

and a poet
worse than me
against its base,

jotting that the felling
will be as quick
as *guillotine*, it won't
even feel a thing,
like Louis & Marie
in '93, jesting *let's be*
chill, no need
to lose our heads.

Premonitions

You were always
one step *ahead* —

leaping from your
seat before the puck
had hit the twine;

remarking *it's delish*
before the food was
on your tongue;

laughing before the
punch line's been
delivered.

You tell me that
your mother pushed
you through the birth
canal, 15 seconds
in front of what
should have *been* —
that she didn't
survive the pain
it put her through,

gasping her final
breath before she even
held you close;

and now she lives
vicariously
through your senses,
in that limbo
beyond the reach
of the rest of us,

pleading that you
stomp upon the brake,
a car to run the red,

furl up your
umbrella, it's the perfect
lightning rod,

forego the juicy
meatball on your plate,
it'll stick in your
trachea—

choking like
the pitcher on the mound —
runners on 2nd & 3rd,
skittishly tossing
a pitch
across the plate,
without the speed &
drop of success,

belted over the fence
into the ocean,
to float upon the waves,
like a beat-up
warning buoy,
soughing *turn*
back while you can

to a boat about to
beach itself on rocks,
a mother & child aboard,
thinking they're having
the time of their marvelous
lives.

The Sommelier

*...with hints of raspberry,
chocolate, citrus and
aromatic in its finish.*

Cut the bullshit, please.
I taste nothing of the
kind—and the only “finish”
I get is in the heartburn
minutes later.

And no, it doesn't pair
well with *salmon*, a rare
chateaubriand,
and your *cacio e pepe*;

I wouldn't even serve
it with McDonald's
or KFC.

I can't believe
you actually took a course
to spit this out,

attempting
to impress us
with your accent—*continental*, you
raise your nose and call it,
your nostrils like two
assholes in the air.

If you don't mind, I'll
have a glass of water
from the tap, despite
the dollar charge. And no,
I don't need a *lime*
wedged on the rim,
a slice of *lemon*
bleeding seeds,

and your boast it's
like the springs of *de Léon*,
will always keep me young
between the bites, my livid
grind of teeth & bitter
scowl.

Les Poèmes

There'll come the day
I simply won't wish to be
found. Please don't
strive to follow.

I'll have no one by
my side, lifting me
off the sand —
like the Lord in Powers'
poem, written in the
year that I was born,
being carried
to and fro.

I might plunge into the
sea, like Auden's
Icarus, while the world
continues on
its indifferent way;

or perhaps I'll be
that moth on the temple
bell,

in *Japan* by
Billy Collins, ever-
seeking out the sleep
that lovers find
once sex is quenched,

and it's *then*
you'll think you've
got me, assuming
I've taken the path
that's rarely trod,
confusing me
with Frost,

breaking up the
bread in case you're
lost, forgetting the buntings
in their hunger, who'll
snatch away the crumbs
before you've even had
the chance to lay them down.

Eden Ave.

The tree across the street
is sprouting red. Although
it's only May, this is by no means
unusual here. The ones which are
adjacent are unfurling orange-
gold.

We're certainly
not *down-under* — where our
Spring's their Autumn chime —
we're clearly beneath
the rippling flags
of old *Ontario*.

But there's a little swath of earth
where *all* is in reverse. By October
they'll be rich in verdancy,
and every *jack-o'-lantern*
carved a grinning green.

That's not to say
we're happy about that here
but it could be worse.

We'll spend November
on our ladders,
picking off the leaves that never
drop—making sure the branches
get a breather
& the birds know when to flee
for the sunny south.

Christmas will *come* as
it always does—as will the snow
and plows which follow.

But when I said it could be worse
I wasn't kidding. The first time
that it happened
all the robins passed us over—
the sight of faded yellow
in the crowns. We were despondent
by the Maples' deathly silence,
that coffee on the terrace
wasn't the same, that it somehow
turned to the froth of pumpkin-
spice,

and if we hadn't thought
to bribe them with our seeds,
we'd still be suffering this—
the best from Adam's Orchard
round the bend—that when *planted*
birth the finest, goddamn
fruit you've ever tasted,
since that moment
of a different
Fall, a Garden's
sinful crunch.

The Prowler

NO TRESSPASSING
Violators will be Persecuted

You tell me it's a
misprint—should read as
Prosecuted

but I strongly disagree—

someone knew *exactly*
what they were doing,
taking a detour
around the lawyers
and their fees that bleed
you dry; thinking
all the judges
are a bunch of hemorrhaged
hearts—give an intruder
20 minutes—in a cushioned,
penthouse cell;
make him listen
to Bobby Sherman
and then let him go his way—

no penance, no remorse,
no lesson
that's been learned.

But give him *persecution* —
ensuring that it's never done
again — harass him at the grocer's,
fling a tomato at his head;

send a message
to his friends
on Instagram — the footage
that shows he loitered
on the *unwelcome* side of the fence;
peering into windows
where he shouldn't;
running for his life
when the Doberman
gave him chase —

trousers *snagging*
on the barb of rusted
wire,

forced to trample home
in his *fluorescent*
Fruit of the Loom,

then coercing him to don
a scarlet T, upstaging
even Hawthorne's
Adulteress, who admitted
off the record
that the shunning &
the sneers
hurt her more
than any barrister
could inflict.

The Language of Sparrows

Our daughter is dead.

We plant seedlings
by her grave in April,
when Spring seduces
with all its promise,
moisten the ground
with a jug of water
and say how, years from now,
a bush will burst and flower,
be home to a family of sparrows,
each knowing the other by their name.

I ask you if birds have names,
like *Alice, Brent, Jessica* and *James*,
if their parents
call these fledglings
when it rains,
say *settle here in branches*
among the leaves that keep you dry—
not in English, mind you,
or any other human tongue
but in the language of sparrows;

each trill, each warbling,
a repartee,
a crafted conversation of the minds.

I then notice
that we never see their wings
amid the showers,
how they disappear in downpours,
seeking shelter
in something we simply cannot see.

When we're old,
when we come to remember
the beloved we have lost,
the *songs* will be shielded
in our shrub—
not a short and stunted one,
but a *grand*, blessed growth,
like the one that spoke to Moses,
afame, uttering
I AM WHO I AM,

one that towers,
dense with green,

a monument
to the child whom we treasured
and the feathers she adored,
naming the formerly fallowed, *hallowed*,
sacred, *remove your shoes*,
Spirits and Sparrows dwell
and sibilate secrets
we're unworthy to glean.

Last of the Party Favours

There's a balloon
beside your bed
that's never been blown.

Emergency condom,
you once joked
in front of your mother,
13 years ago,
regretting it as
soon as the syllables
fled your mouth—

and it should have been
occupied
otherwise, heaving your *breath*
in its rubbery red,
just one gasp short
of bursting;
ensuring no errant, coloured
pin could pop its skin;

and you be left
with something grounded,
her final gift to you,

tattered on the rug,
its end a twisted knot,
resembling the navel
you clearly noticed
when she donned her halter
top, right before she died
that hazy summer,
thinking it strange
she clearly wanted you to look,
the loss of her ability to
rise into the air & fly away.

Kaboom

You've squandered
your very best,
on that which fails to give
you lauds & laurels:

the one-liner
which you muttered
in the mausoleum hush,
amid the downcast
veils & incense,

the time you propelled
a stone along the water,
skipping 30 times—halfway
across the lake
while no one watched;
too busy with their selfies
and panache;

your *I love you*
that you voiced
into the mirror,
before you botched it
in the hour
that she came;

and as the bard who
saved your greatest
for the job that paid you
squat—*McWillie's Ads & Hoopla*—
the day that you were fired:

There's nothing like a
juicy, in-house steak—
bloodless—our dye resembles
anything that's spilled,
nothing to dampen
your smile or the
pleasure that it brings,
and you'll forget it
screamed its head off
from a hook,
say *abattoir* is
the loveliest word
our language has
come up with—
masking *shock & slaughter*,
the squeals of *misery*,
packaged in its pieces
so they'll say *it's beautiful*.

Best Served Cold

I've learned my bitter
lesson, to never ask a
question on our city's
Facebook group.

*Does anyone know
if there's a Dairy Queen
in town?*

— Yeah, it's at 33 Google Lane

There's no reason
to be an asshat. Maybe I was
lonely, just sparking a conversation
in the night. Had no one
else to talk to
when the winds were from the north,

and stars were spelling
Loser where *Orion*
usually dwells, ignored
& most forlorn,
none with which
to share a celebration;

and FYI, it's not some run-
of-the-mill DQ,
the one on Google Lane,

but one in which they'll
carry you on their backs,
sing you *Happy Birthday*
in the sun —

and their ice cream
never melts, regardless if it's
30+ above, no matter how
many candles blaze
at the top of your Blizzard
cake,

and I'll never-ever
invite you for a scoop,
walk you to the beach
(the most pristine one
in the world,

at the end of the *road*
I bet you thought
could not be real),

in spite of the
teary regrets
you'll no doubt offer,
emojis I will savour
on my phone, such weeps
& wails of sorrow,

your delicious,
frozen sorrow.

Paper Mate

There used to be
a cache of pens
beside this register,

in this book shop
where I work,
bagging authors
and wishing folks
a lovely day.

At 9:15 am,
paper cup of
coffee in my hand,
I see there's only
one—

in the china mug
that held them,

one time carried
morning's
roasted brew.

My boss spots
my confusion,
says she's making
things efficient,
adds it takes
an extra *second*
to pick one needed for
a note, for when a
senior saunters in,
wanting to write a
cheque,

that *choice* is overrated,
a purveyor of wasted
hours
once the end of the
year is tallied.

I don't equate
efficiency
with *anal-*
retentiveness,

wonder *what*
I can possibly do
in that tick of time—
a quantum *sliver*
that's been saved.

She tells me *much*
can be accomplished,
noting *light* makes the most
of every moment,
no matter how
miniscule,

moving three hundred thousand
K's that very instant,

making me *ashamed*,
that I've failed to give
a second what it's due,

that I'll blink as fast
as I can—

seeing all the grandeur
she's achieved,

tell her about the way
in which I'll top it.

Aardvark

There he is again, the mofo,
on the very first page of
Merriam-Webster,
the top of the list of *Animalia*,
the Everest of his kind;

Aaron, if he were human,
dismissing as jealousy
his rivals' cry of "cheat!" —

that the double A
is so superfluous,
he's *no* transistor battery
or city on the Danish coast;

and if he could scream —
a pirate's *aargh!* —

as if on a ship of stolen
gold; strutting haughtily, as though
he'd a mane of the very
same colour, asking disdainfully,
just WHO is the King of beasts?

1.7 Seconds

Elijah's *perched*
upon my shoulders,
surveying his kindly kingdom
in the yard. Every finch and
chipmunk bowing their *heads*
in supplication.

Elijah would have been
born if not for my *missing*
the rubbish bin, my toss
of a crumpled page, my bending
to pick it up. And if my scribbles
had been better, I would have
never blown my stack, hurled
it like some wannabe
Michael Jordan, trying to beat
the buzzer
in some phantom 7th game.

He would have *swung*
like an iron ball
from my outstretched arms—
the locking of our hands,

my feigning a *hammer throw* —
for an elusive, Olympic gold;
his boots of
white a-whirl above the
grass, a blur of giddy feet.

He would have told me
that he loved me
if I hadn't changed my
mind about the paper.
One point seven *seconds*
of indecision—judging
that the store brand's
A-OK.

Elijah would have beamed
through *Happy Birthday* —
regardless of my botching every
note—angelic in his
smile, the gleam of teeth that
rose on through his gums,
like moles which slowly dig
their way to the surface.

I should have *learned*
the proper scales, ducking
out of lessons
as a kid, so I could bounce
a rubber ball that made
a thud upon the ground,
like a nail that's being
driven in a coffin.

All this set me back
in the time an amber
jumps to *stop*. That day
I picked my wife
up after work. It's odd
it took so long for her
to recover from concussion,
the loss of a missing
carriage. Someone
must have took it
in the night, left
at the end of the drive

while I pondered things
important—how quickly
she might learn
those jarring turns—
in a chintzy, chair-on-wheels.

This never would have
happened if not for Jordan—
damn to hell
his pricey, airy shoes.
The pause of breath
it took me—to eye
his *signature*,
there along the insole,

pretending I got lucky,
won a *pair*
of courtside tix. That he
signed it with a Sharpie—
the one he grabbed on
sale at *Grand & Toy*,

looking for a *Furby*
for his child,
seeing nothing but
pens & stickies
on the spinner,

twirling it like a *Spalding*
on his finger, wishing
he could fling it in the
air in a final heave—
before the siren & its red
wail *time to go*.

Artificial Intelligence

—for Alfred Wellington Purdy

It came to a head
the moment I read
Al Purdy's
printed name—
as AI in upper
case,

in this milieu
of robotic
replacement,

an oxymoron,
perhaps, warned that
we've begun
our own extinction,
flung-in-motion

photography
clearly fake,
paintings that are void
of human hands,

absent of the errors
which denote our *humanity*;

and that hot new
book of poems
everyone's talking
about these days,

created by a
chatbox —
in under
half an hour,

one that's *never*
known the sting of
love and loss,
watched a mother
slip away
beyond its reach,
like all the Alfreds
of the world,

bringing back the time
I asked for *Alan*,
at the *Al Dente*
Ristorante,
a hands-on
connoisseur
I believed,

that Mr. Dente
had embodied
the ideal of being perfect—
to the tooth, I later
learned,

that sweet spot
in the middle
of what's otherwise
overdone,
undercooked
and hard to chew,

because a flawless
stovetop timer
had miscounted
nine short minutes,

had no idea
of how it felt
to dine in candlelight,
hold a *belovèd's*
shadowed hand
between the swallows.

ça n'a pas d'importance

I'll hear of your divorce,
your car in disrepair,
your mother & father infirmed,
your nasty memo from the bank,

the Nagasaki nuking,
the Allende assassination,
the loss of Turtle Island
and the classist, racist
renderings
by historians
coating truth
with biotoxins.

I'll listen as you tell me
that your Alma Mater sucks,
that the Sugar Bowl is lost,
that you've no one good to
fuck on Christmas Eve
or New Year's Day;

that Yemen has no food,
genocide's *très en vogue*,

and that we still hear *Sharia*
screamed in Afghan streets
and schools.

Speak to me of cancer,
your cancer,
and I'll show you that the sun
is just a star up-close
and personal,
a pin of pointed light
like a billion-trillion others.

Then and only then
do our worries lose
their significance.
Then and only then
will I ask the *world*
and you for silence.

Psalm for Kenneth Salzmann

*What is it about our conditioning
that moves us to hate the weak
and ugly? What stories were we told
of beautiful riders and delicate girls
to make us persecutors of the lame,
the coarse, and the broken?*

—Leonard Cohen, *A Ballet of Lepers*

Have mercy on the man
upon the bench, whose palms
lie open
for the doves—
this flock that will
adore him
though he has no seed to give.

If we loved as well as they,
he'd live until one-hundred,
teaching us to *kiss*
the sewer rats, the flies
upon the dung of German
Shepherds,

and even the
Deutsche themselves —
when the Holocaust
was over and the gates
gave up their ash
& living dead;

beating their sour
breasts:

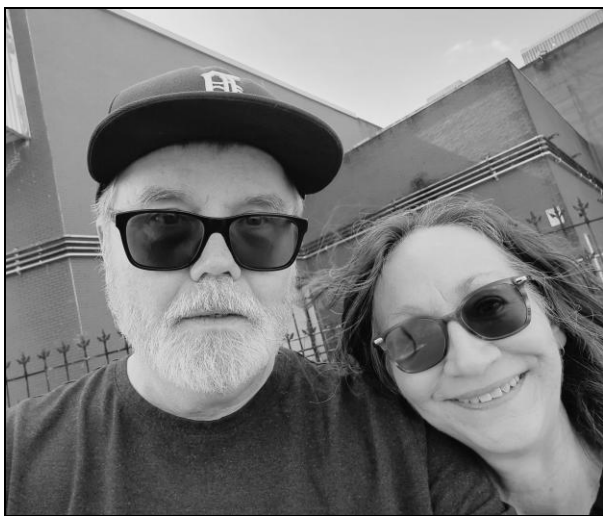
*We knew nothing
about it! Davon haben
wir nichts gewusst!*

Then tell me
you know of anguish
more than they: oppressor
& oppressed. Gentile,
Ashkenazi. In Hell
there is no difference.
In Heaven
they've yet to sing.



What is done out of love always occurs
beyond good and evil.

—Friedrich Nietzsche



Andreas Gripp was born and raised in Treaty 6 Territory (London, Ontario) and in 2024 relocated to Leamington with his wife, Carrie. He's the author of over three-dozen books of poetry, including *Clocking the Equus: Poems Selected and New* (2025). His poems have been praised for their lyrical and literary merit, accessibility, and for their blend of comic and poignant storytelling.

Andreas Gripp writes poetry for people who don't like poetry



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